



## A different Veterans Day -- one daughter's perspective

by MARY JANE BURKE -- GUEST OP-ED COLUMN

VETERANS DAY 2012 is somehow different to this daughter of a veteran.

For our nation, it is a day of mixed emotion. We want to celebrate those who have served and are serving.

We are happy that our brave young men and women are in the process of coming home from the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet, we also mourn those who will not come home or who come home with physical and mental challenges that will change them forever.

We rejoice with the families reunited and grieve with families who lost their loved ones. We worry about the lack of jobs for those returning and the veterans who are homeless and those so desperate that they choose to end their lives.

It is a day for contradictions and a roller coaster of feelings — perhaps it always has been.

For me and my family, this is a very special Veterans Day.

At the San Joaquin Delta Community College a "Veterans Room" will be dedicated in the name of my father, Leo P. Burke — a veteran of the Marine Corps in World War II.

The school, where my Dad served for 29 years on the board of trustees, has chosen to honor him for his lifelong commitment to veterans' causes.

Like most daughters, I thought my Dad was special in his public service as President of the Disabled American Veterans Board of San Joaquin County, a member and Chairman of the California Veterans Board and the Governor's Commission on Veterans Homes (appointed by governors of both political parties).

He was also National Vice Commander of the American Legion and was appointed by the United States Secretary of Veterans affairs to serve on the Advisory Committee of Cemeteries and Memorials.

While my Dad was special to me, he was also an example of what most veterans who have served our nation do when they return from military service — they keep on serving and impacting the lives of so many who will never even know their names.

Few speak of their accomplishments in the service of their country unless asked and most simply go about their daily lives doing good things—taking care of their families, working hard, fulfilling the civic responsibilities and providing service to others.

Most use their military service as a source of learning about life, both good and bad, and growing wiser.

Veterans take pride in their country, even when they may think its policies are wrong.

Veterans teach us to believe in and serve in causes greater than ourselves.

Our responsibility as residents of our community, state and nation, is to make sure that the service and sacrifice of our veterans was never in vain.

Observing Veterans Day is not about being pro- or anti-war; it is not about being conservative or liberal; it is not about political parties; it is not about race, creed or national origin.

Veterans Day is about being an American and honoring all who serve.

How we can best do that may be found in these words my Dad used to quote:

Full service needs a greater toll—

That we who live give heart and soul

To keep the land they died to save

And be ourselves in turn, The Brave.

May Veterans Day, 2012 be a meaningful time for each of us as we pause to thank those who have served and are currently serving our nation.

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What is the author's purpose?

Who is the intended audience?

**Assignment:** Find out more information about veterans and/or Veterans Day. Report your findings and cite your sources. Ideas may include interviewing a veteran, reading about the personal experience of a veteran, researching healthcare for military service personnel, etc. You decide. Ask questions. Be curious. Learn. Report. If service members do just the minimum, what would America become? Maybe you can do a little more than the minimum with this assignment to honor them.

